

Why We Gather

Heb 10:19-25

If today is your first Sunday with us, or first in a while—we are introducing the **9 Commitments** of our new church covenant. **One commitment each week** to focus on its value for *your* own personal growth and flourishing.

I think of these **9 Commitments** as essentially **9 Habits** of the of the Xn life. Really that's what they are. Habits for Christian maturity.

And the reason these **9 Habits** form the heart of our new church covenant is: that's what the local church is all about—discovering Christian growth *in community... flourishing* as disciples together because it is not happening solo.

Commitment # 1—Devote ourselves to Jesus daily (2 weeks ago)

Commitment #2—Gather with the church

Our Scripture passage for gathering with the church is Heb 10:19-25. We call it the letter to the Hebrews but it's more like a sermon—with a strong appeal and challenge to grow in Christian maturity.

At the end of **ch 5**/and into **ch 6**, he says, *“by now” you should be adulting as Christians, no longer children spiritually speaking; you should be off milk and on to solid food/growing in wisdom/discernnt.*

Now, here in **ch 10**—*he calls them to be faithful to gather together; to be present and to engage in the worship gathering of the church as if it was absolutely necessary for our own personal growth and maturity in J X.*

Heb 10 gives us three reasons for **why we gather** for Christian worship.

1. To draw near to God, together (v 22)
2. To strengthen our shared confession (v 23)
3. To stir up one another (v 24)

Let's work through this rich passage together...

1. To draw near to God, together (v 22)

read 19-22

Draw near to God is worship language. And **Let us draw near** is about worshipping together.

We gather together to celebrate “the new and living way”—the way Jesus opened up for us by tearing down the veil of the Temple.

When Jesus died on the Cross, the Gospels tell us that the Veil of the Temple in Jerusalem was ripped in half—from top to bottom.

The writer Hebrews says, *when that happened*, a new era of worship began.

Thousands/thousands of animal sacrifices @ Tabernacle / Temple throughout the history of Israel’s worshipers—all pointed to one ultimate, final sacrifice for sins. The atoning sacrifice of X as *the* Lamb of God on the Cross. For us!

Read **Heb 10:11, 12, 14**

Heb 10:19 “blood of Jesus”

In other words, through Jesus’ death on the cross, God himself is unveiled to us, and access to the Father is thrown wide open.

Think about the purpose of the veil of the temple for a moment. It was the main symbol for separating God and man—a thick boundary—between God’s perfect holiness and man’s sinfulness and need.

But, it was not only a boundary—it was also a unity. FF Bruce: (adapted)

The veil which, from one point of view, kept God and man apart, can (also) be thought of... as bringing them together; for it was the same veil which, on one side, touched the glory of God/other side touched the need of men/women.

In the same way, God and man were brought together in Jesus Christ; he is *the* Mediator between God and Man because he shares the nature of both.

So, the veil of his flesh was torn, v. 20, that we might draw near to God.

And not just as individuals. But together as a worshipping community.

“**Let us...**” v 22 / Let us v 23 / Let us v 24 (this the produce section of the NT)

No, but seriously, he says, ‘**Brothers and sisters**’ (v 19)—he’s thinking of us being together.

And v. 21—**we** have a high priest. Not just **me** but **we**. We have a great high priest over the **house of God**.

So, his idea of worship includes a new kind of gathering—a new house, where Jesus gathers us in his name / by his blood / as our priest. The **house of God** is this newly formed worshiping community. So, much so, that this church building should only be thought of as the **house of God** when true worshipers are here, actively trusting X by faith:

As we **draw near** to God, with new hearts and **true hearts** (v 22),
As we exercise **trust / faith** (full assurance of faith—in Jesus X),
With a clean conscience (a conscience that has been plagued with
guilt for a life-time...).

I really like this point about conscience in v. 22.

Read v. 22b

Is your conscience bothering you?

(L Skynyrd)

What we know about the history of religion is that a lot of people come to church to clear their conscience... to pay off their guilt. And that's deeply ironic because it never works.

Even the OT sacrifices could not perfect the conscience: **Heb 9:9**

Instead, you should come to church to gather with other desperate sinners who are here to throw ourselves fully on the mercy of Jesus Christ.

As we do, we experience the power of the cleansing blood of X!

Heb 9:14

2. To strengthen our shared confession (v 23)

Read v 23

The confession he has in mind is not the confession of a particular sin. Rather, your initial confession of faith and hope in Jesus Christ.

Rom 10 “if you *confess* with your mouth that Jesus is Lord; and *believe* in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

If you have done this, you probably vowed to God something like: I want to love you Jesus / follow you for the rest of my life. Well, that’s easier said than...

So, that’s why we need the church. We need each other to help us hold fast and stay true to our initial confession.

And there really is power in that shared confession. It gives us hope!

Illus (Psalm 122: It’s where I found my tribe)

vv. 3-4a

Jay Mabry: “I found my tribe—I finally found my people.” I found people who give me hope/strength. A gospel society bound firmly together—**strengthening each other—like the walls of Jerusalem** (v 3). Like the massive building blocks in an ancient wall.

Illus

I was talking with someone new this week—‘so what brought you here’? He said, “I feel this increasing need to surround myself with other believers. I lived an unhealthy lifestyle for years. It’s empty! I need to surround myself with godly people/gospel people because apart fr that I am pretty sure I can’t trust myself... I might drift back into my old ways.”

V 23: *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope, without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.*

Trans

So, God has promised to keep us **individually**, and to keep us **together**.

3. To Stir Up One Another (v 24)

I want to call your attention to the words “stir up” one another (ESV).

NIV = **spur** one another on

KJV = **provoke** one another

Commentators like to point out that this word is almost always used in a negative sense; of frustration / sharp disagreement. Like in Acts 15:39, where Paul & Barnabas had such a sharp disagreement about whether to take John Mark with them—they **provoked** one another to point of going their separate...

Another place it is used in negative sense is in that famous 1 Cor 13 passage. *Love is patient/kind; it does not insist on its own way; it is not easily **provoked**.*

But here in Hebrews 10:24 is a very positive use of this word!

Let us consider *how to stir up/provoke one another* to love &

The idea here is a high energy level given to the moment. Concentrated /intense emotional... energized by love and affection to promote love and kindness...

Illus

This reminds me of that hype moment before the **Hokies** take the field; linebacker and Capt of the defense, **Kaleb Spencer**... has the starters surrounding him... and he's headbutting them helmet to helmet....

Commitment #2

Gather with the church—to treasure the gospel by: being present, welcoming others, showing hospitality, praying together, singing, reading Scripture, confessing sin, giving offerings, and receiving baptism and the Lord's Supper **because we cannot faithfully follow Jesus alone.**
(Acts 2:42–47; Rom 15:7; 2 Cor 8:1–5, 9; Heb 10:24–25; 2 Tim 4:1–2)

Close:

I want to close with v. 25—with his directness about gathering together!